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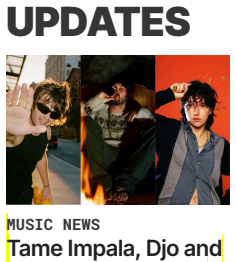

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"It feels good to be a deadbeat": Kevin Parker returns with his rawest Tame Impala record yet

Kevin Parker has spent 15 years reshaping pop from behind the curtain. On 'Deadbeat', he dares to show the man behind the TAME IMPALA myth.

ARTISTS: TAME IMPALA + TOPICS: INTERVIEWS +

PUBLISHED: 4:00 PM, SEPTEMBER 19, 2025 | BY MARTYN YOUNG

Kevin Parker, the Australian pop genius behind Tame Impala, has made some of the most recognisable and influential music of the last 15 years, shaping the way modern alt-pop has sounded while staying as resolutely unrecognisable and inscrutable as possible. 'The Less I Know The Better' isn't just the title of one of his most famous songs, but also an example of how he has built a career on not giving too much of himself away. Nobody quite knows the real Kevin Parker. Now, in 2025, as he prepares to release his fifth Tame Impala record, 'Deadbeat', Kevin is ready to explore new personal and creative horizons.

From its black and white artwork featuring personal photos of Kevin with his children, or as a gawky 16-year-old kid, it's instantly apparent that Tame Impala are a different proposition this time. The aesthetic is a world away from the fantastical, otherworldly psychedelic dreamscapes that formed the visual character of albums like 2015's modern masterpiece 'Currents' or his last record, 2020's 'The Slow Rush'. 'Deadbeat' is more soft focus and gauzy – images filtered through a hazy, raw gaze into Parker himself, unvarnished and pure. It's a window into a different sonic world.

"I did want this one to have a different mood," says Kevin, as he gets back into the Tame Impala saddle after doing all manner of collabs and extracurricular activities over the past five years. "It's nice to have the ball rolling again with all the album stuff," he says. "It's been pretty crazy the last couple of months finishing the album. Overwhelming, but ultimately good."

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Perhaps it was so overwhelming as the different nature of the record saw Parker going against the established sonic framework in which he had worked over his previous four records. "I wanted it to have a different mood, but sometimes it can be hard to drag what my usual mood is out of that," he admits. "Everything I do, I try to do as naturally as possible. When you do it like that, things can end up back where they started."

To an extent, he is right – the Tame Impala sound and vibe is so distinctive that no matter what he does, it is going to sound like Tame Impala. Yet the tension between that satisfying sound and his newfound desire to shake things up makes for a record that veers between comforting and familiar to wild and exuberant, with a clubby techno pulse driving the album's most exciting moments.

So why does Kevin Parker feel now is the right time to let us in to see behind the music? "It's just something I wanted to do," he shrugs with typical understatement. "I felt like my music has always been immersive and expansive, but I've never been comfortable being the face of it. I hide among the music. I finally decided it's the right time to do that." Content to be in the shadows for so long, it took Kevin looking inwards to his own passions to discover a different way of expressing himself – a discovery that was scary, but represents his new era. "I've been realising that so much of my favourite music is personal that I made the decision to drum up the courage to do it," he smiles. "I'm trying to have a bit more of a fuck-it attitude. Fuck it, let's just do it."

A fuck-it attitude sounds anathema to a man who has given off the air of a mad sonic scientist, perfecting his music to within an inch of its life in the lab – but it's a formula that has made him incredibly successful. To let go and say "fuck it, let's just do it" is the biggest change for Tame Impala since their early evolution from muscular rock band to dreamy psych-pop innovators. "I wanted to make a really simplistic album sonically," says Kevin. "Something that was really almost bare bones. The album that I wanted to make was even more raw and distorted than it ended up being, just because I spent so much time with it. If I give myself enough time, I'll just end up adding layers to things. That was the vision originally. Something really punky."

That punkiness he alludes to comes out not in the form of a three-chord, rush-to-the-finish punk-rock, but a more primally aggressive electronic sound that is both primitive yet futuristic at the same time. It comes from musical passions that Kevin has always held but only now feels ready to truly embrace. "I've always been a fan of techno music, as well as some amounts of psy-trance," he enthuses.

"I'M TRYING TO HAVE A BIT MORE OF A FUCK-IT ATTITUDE. FUCK IT, LET'S JUST DO IT"

He's also a big fan of bush doof, a dance party held in the bush, or just outside in the countryside, if you prefer. Think Calvin Harris if he was raised in Sydney and spent his days playing music from a truck in the dusty Australian outback, rather than growing up selling fish on a supermarket counter in Bathgate, Scotland.

For Kevin Parker, bush doof was a fascinating, strange thing that he encountered from afar. "The whole bush doof thing is my way of painting a picture of the atmosphere that I imagine some of this music to be in," he says. "I say some of it, as I would've loved to make an album that was techno from start to finish," he continues, acknowledging that his pop sensibilities ever so slightly suppressed the doof. Still though, the power of the doof looms large on 'Deadbeat'. Oh – doof is the sound of the music, btw. Doof doof doof. You can almost feel the incessant beat pounding in your chest as you read the words.

Kevin's direct involvement with the scene was more as a passive admirer than a fully fledged taps-aff madman. "I think so much of my fascination with techno music is that I don't go to a lot of raves," he laughs. He doesn't seem like a ravey kind of guy, to be fair. It's always the quiet ones, though. "I find myself in them sometimes, but it's a part of my life that hasn't really evolved in the same way as it did with me as a person in rock'n'roll. It's something I like to explore and have fun with."

On 'Deadbeat', he explores these electronic sounds on instinctively primal, incessant pulsing dance tracks – like on opening track 'My Old Ways' with its wonky, rolling piano hook that evolves into a filthily addictive beat. Hypnotic and invigorating at the same time, it's music that expands your mind and moves your body simultaneously.

That hypnotic quality is why Kevin is drawn to music like this and why he vociferously defends it against people who might just want him to do some good ol' fashioned guitar riffs. "The thing that I tell people – and people don't always agree with me on this – is I've always found that psychedelic music and psychedelic rock and techno and psy-trance have a lot of parallels," he explains. "There are a lot of connecting points. I've always felt this way. For me, listening to an open-ended psych jam is similar to a really hypnotic, slowly evolving electronic track. I like the way that my mind drifts off. I like the way that I'm hypnotised. I've always drawn dots between the two, but other people aren't as receptive to the idea, which is fine. A lot of my music, and especially on this album, is me trying to prove that point."

ls good to be a deadbeat": Kevin Parker returns with his rawest Tame Impala record yet "It feels good to be a deadbeat": Kevin Parker returns with his rawest Tame Impala record yet

When it came to actually making 'Deadbeat', Kevin knew exactly what he wanted to do. He's obviously multi-skilled and adept in the studio, but often what comes out of his mind is as much a surprise to him as anyone else. But this time, there was intention and a strong desire to make something that would fit the dancefloor but also bring a different lyrical shade to his music.

"Unlike the rest of my albums, I had quite a strong vision of it to begin with very early on," he says. "Usually, I just fuck around and see what happens. I just do my thing. With this one, I decided I was going to try and push things into sounding a certain way. For the better, it was a bit of that and ended up a bit of spontaneous whatever. It was a good experiment, starting with something really extreme and ending with something closer to what is naturally going to happen."

Lyrically, 'Deadbeat' is also a different kind of album that finds Kevin writing in a different way – mostly about himself – which turned out to be a revelation for someone not prone to self-reflection. Frequently, he is not just reflective but incredibly scathing of himself, as he embodies the persona of the title. There's the sense that if he was going to focus inwardly on this record, he had to be as honest and brutal as possible to make peace with his flaws.

"It's a weird one. I don't always know why I do that," he laughs. "To me, the most obvious answer is that it feels therapeutic. When I'm writing lyrics, if I come up with one that's particularly disparaging to myself, it just feels really good. It's only now that I've finished the album and people are starting to hear it, and people are asking me why I'm being so negative, but to me, it's a really positive thing. It's almost as though it's a celebration of being a deadbeat."

Realising that you can fuck up sometimes – and that life or, indeed, your music can never be pristine and magical – sees the album as something of an antidote to the harmful, endless quest for perfection that a music obsessive like Kevin Parker may have been drawn to. This is very much not a perfect record, and it's all the better for it.

You're struck by lines on the album like the yearning cries of "I can be emotional" on 'Afterthought' or on the dancefloor banger 'No Reply' where he says he wishes he were a normal guy. Is that perhaps a reflection on the added fame and public persona he has had over the last 15 years? A fame that has seen him collaborate with pop stars like Lady Gaga, Rihanna and Dua Lipa? No, it's something far simpler than that.

"That line is in reference to girls," he laughs in his brilliantly deadpan style. "Y'know, romance or whatever. Especially me when I was much younger. I was aware I was a bit of a weirdo, and I just didn't want to seem like a weirdo to girls. I would try really hard to be normal. I think that made me even more different."

That point of difference is what led him to such success with Tame Impala though. All the best pop stars in history are a bit different. "It's a funny thing, the dynamic between wanting to feel normal and wanting to feel different," he ponders, pausing for a second. "I've always instinctively hated the idea of being like everybody else. It's a strange thing." When he started Tame Impala, it was a way to navigate through that weirdness. "Making music for me in the very early days was a way of feeling normal, or feeling as good as everyone else seems to," he reflects. "That sounds dark," he laughs.

"I'VE ALWAYS INSTINCTIVELY HATED THE IDEA OF BEING LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE"

The therapy of writing about yourself, warts and all, allowed him to be playful and revealing and vulnerable all at the same time. A form of lyrical catharsis. "It feels good to do that," he smiles. "It's putting it all out in the open. Accepting. When you know that people can see you for what you really are, it's very liberating."

The public persona of Kevin Parker is of this sonic visionary; someone who can literally do everything and is a wizard in the studio. Does he sometimes wish, though, that perversely he wasn't so good at everything and didn't have that blessed curse of being able to do everything on his own? Or maybe we just give him too much credit?

"Unfortunately, I don't really see it that way," he laughs, rejecting the genius tag. "I'm always trying to get better and be better. I can understand that people see it that way. To me, though, it's just a necessity to do what I want to do. A lot of the time, I see the fact that I do everything myself as a weakness. I would love to be the kind of person who can seamlessly work with people and share my ideas and share them really well and just be a team pleaser. I just can't. For me, it's like, 'Oh fuck it, I'll just go and do it myself'."

There are lots of moments on 'Deadbeat' where the genius tag doesn't feel fanciful or hyperbolic, but rather just an example of demonstrable fact. You've got tracks like the grandiose epic of closer 'End Of Summer', but the real magic moment here is in the middle of the album – in particular, there's a deftly beautiful, wistful piece called 'Not My World' that is among the finest pieces of music Tame Impala have ever produced. "'Not My World' is the closest to the mission statement for the album that I had at the start," says Kevin. "Really stripped back, sounds like it's been made in the room."

ls good to be a deadbeat": Kevin Parker returns with his rawest Tame Impala record yet

Probably the biggest change, at least in a personal sense, for Kevin this time around is that 'Deadbeat' is the first Tame Impala album released since the birth of his children. His daughter Peach was born in 2021, with another child arriving this year. Has this seismic life event changed the way he approaches his work?

"It has, but I think when it comes to thinking of myself as an artist and writing songs and stuff like that, it's something that I try to just switch off," he says. "I like to feel like I'm a free blob that's not tied down in any way. It feels like I'm at my best when I'm not feeling responsible for anything else. That probably is true of art a lot of the time."

The title has obvious connotations of the clichéd 'deadbeat dad', but Kevin insists that the deadbeat is purely him, in a playfully personal sense. His daughter Peach is beginning to appreciate him not as the all-conquering global pop star that he is, but maybe as a cool dad who does some cool stuff.

"Peach is four years old now, so she's starting to cotton on," he beams. "It's nice to see her slowly become aware that I'm a musician. She'll hear it sometimes when we're out and about and say, 'That's Dad's music'. That is kind of nice."

Some of the cool things her dad gets to do from time to time prompt some interesting reactions. "It must give her a strange, distorted idea of what parents are," laughs Kevin, as he recalls some of his musical activities with Peach in attendance. "We went to the Dua Lipa concert, and Dua got me up to sing a song with her, and Peach was there, and she went crazy. We were at a Wiggles concert and they got me up as well. She must just think that's what you do at a concert – your dad gets up and plays a song with them. Where's everyone else's dad?"

When you've achieved as much as Tame Impala and had so much acclaim and influence, it would be easy to think of a new record in terms of legacy – something Kevin Parker pays very little attention to. 'Deadbeat' exists on its own wonderfully idiosyncratic island, with echoes of what has gone before, but forging its own path for the future.

"When I'm making an album, it's the last thing I'm thinking of, as it just adds a ton of expectation and baggage," answers Kevin, as he's asked if he ever thinks about the band's previous albums. "When I'm making music, I just like to think I'm a nobody starting at the beginning. That's the most empowering thing I can feel, ironically."

There is, though, no escaping Tame Impala's omnipresent influence on alt-pop music in the 21st century. Unless you're actually Kevin Parker, and then you can easily escape it.

"I'm always the last one to notice when my music has influenced people or a sound," he says. "This is an interesting parallel, but it's kind of like how you can't see your own face in your kids. Everyone tells me that Peach looks like me, but I don't see it. I don't see it at all. People say, 'Oh my god, this artist, they're totally ripping you off', or you can hear your music in lots of different music – and I just never can, because it's your music and it just sounds good."

It just sounds good: four very simple words that perhaps explain the Tame Impala phenomenon perfectly. Understated yet wildly inventive. Clever yet not serious or earnest. Creative, but never wilfully oblique. Kevin Parker's ever-fascinating sonic odyssey takes a diverting course on a genuinely different new record.

Deadbeats of the world unite and take over. ■

Taken from the October 2025 issue of Dork. Tame Impala's album 'Deadbeat' is out 17th October.

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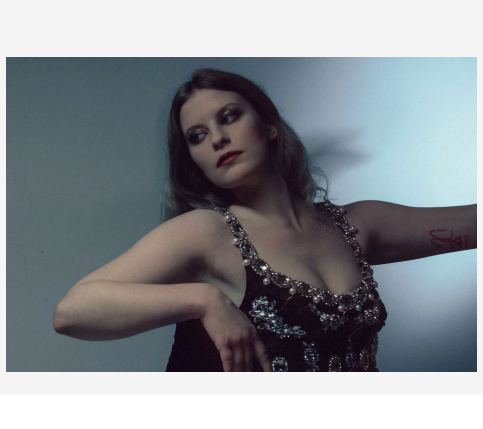

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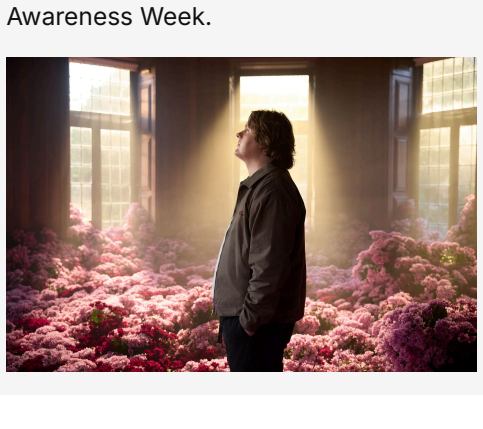

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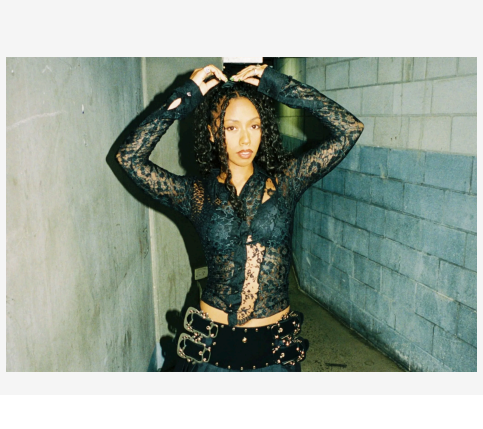

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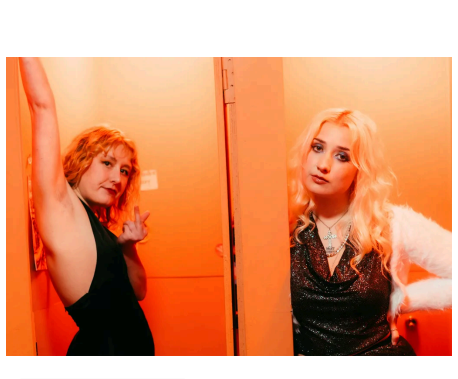

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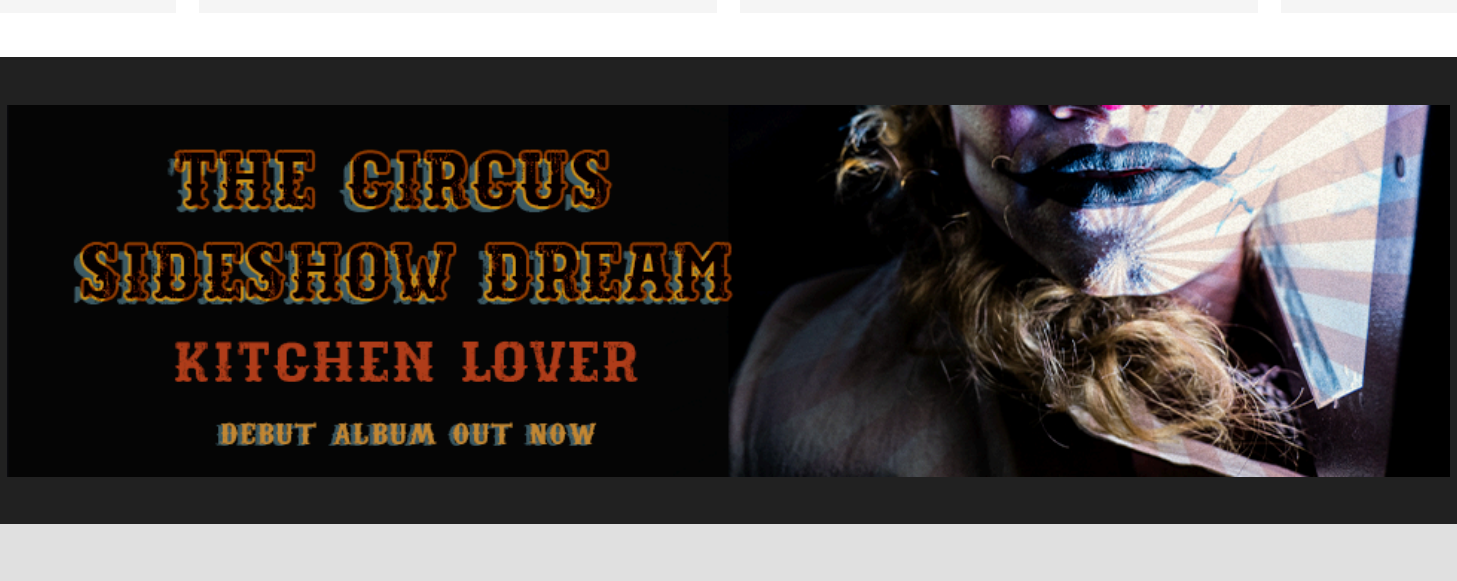
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